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SOUTH AFRICA

Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerke
van Suid-Afrika

Dutch Reformed Church

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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MISSION CENTENARY

Exactly a hundred years ago, in 1861, a middle-aged Scotsman, the Rev. Alexander MacKidd, and a young Swiss, the Rev. Henri Gonin, arrived in South Africa to become the first "foreign" missionaries of the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk. The decision to establish foreign mission stations (i.e. beyond the borders of the Cape Colony) was taken by the Cape Synod in 1857. At that time all ministers and missionaries of the church were trained or recruited overseas, as the church's own theological seminary was only opened in 1859.

Mr. MacKidd and Mr. Gonin were destined for the Transvaal, where no missionary work was done by any church or missionary society at that time. Earlier attempts by English, French and American missionaries had to be abandoned as a result of inter-tribal warfare and the hostility of native chiefs. While the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk was still trying to find missionaries for its new venture, however, the Berlin Missionary Society succeeded in getting a foothold in the Eastern Transvaal in 1860. The Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk was, therefore, the second body to start a permanent missionary undertaking in the Transvaal.

It was difficult to find a native chief who was willing to allow missionaries among his people, but eventually Mr. Gonin succeeded in establishing a mission station in the Western Transvaal, while his colleague went to the Northern Transvaal. Mr. MacKidd, who in the meantime had married a South African girl, started his work in May, 1863, in the Soutpansberg district, where the centenary of the work will be celebrated in May, 1963.

Unfortunately his life was very short. His wife died in 1864, and Mr. MacKidd himself a year later. He was succeeded by the Rev. Stephanus Hofmeyr, a South African who continued the work for 40 years and became one of the most famous missionaries who preached the Gospel to the heathen in this country. Mr. Hofmeyr's work was continued by his son and his son-in-law.

From the Transvaal the work spread further afield, to Southern and Northern Rhodesia, to Nyasaland and elsewhere. The results of those labours are apparent from the statistics published in this issue. No wonder that preparations are already being made for the celebration of the centenary. The plans include the publication of a history of the work, the building of a memorial at the old mission station, the building of a centenary church, and a theological training fund for non-white ministers and evangelists.

NEW STATISTICS

The total Christian community represented by the federated Dutch Reformed Mother and Mission Churches (Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerke) now totals 2,123,923. Of these no less than 46 per cent, are non-whites. There are 1,045,036 communicant members, of whom 453,822 are non-whites.

Statistics collected by the Church Information Office in Cape Town for the World Christian Handbook show that there are 4,202 places of worship. There are 1,386 ordained white ministers and 144 ordained non-white ministers. Lay workers (excluding elders and deacons) total 110 whites and 4,190 non-whites. The churches have 13 theological schools and colleges in the various territories.

In addition to the 691,214 white communicants and 95,253 Coloured communicants inside and outside South Africa, there are 60,971 Bantu communicants in the Orange Free State, 56,357 in the Transvaal, 10,350 in the Cape Province, 7,861 in Natal, 70,319 in Nyasaland, 29,484 in Southern Rhodesia, 16,166 in Northern Rhodesia, 3,201 in Northern Nigeria, 3,860 in Bechuanaland and 918 in South-West Africa.

The total Christian community is composed of 691,214 whites and 286,947 Coloureds, together with 132,289 Bantu in the Orange Free State, 174,869 in the Transvaal, 35,396 in the Cape Province, 20,899 in Natal, 150,574 in Nyasaland, 87,188 in Southern Rhodesia, 28,330 in Northern Rhodesia, 40,084 in Northern Nigeria, 21,600 in Bechuanaland and 3,783 in South-West Africa.

The survey also shows that the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerke do missionary work in 14 territories and among 17 language groups. There are 2,623 mission schools with 5,209 teachers and 178,372 scholars, 34 hospitals with 420,324 patients, and 2 leper institutions with 17,009 patients.

FROM OTHER COUNTRIES

"We regret that, owing to a rigid press censorship, it is not possible to include any news or comment upon the current situation in Ceylon . . . We in Ceylon must not be content with the pharasaical pleasure of studying the problems of other people, assessing their prejudices and prescribing the remedy. In the Indian-Tamil population on the estates we have a major problem of our own which we are refusing to look at because we are afraid, and the saddest part about it is that, unlike the situation in America and South Africa, the Church in Ceylon is keeping silent." — The Christian News Bulletin (Ceylon).

"In the pleasant island of Ceylon Mrs. Bandaranaike pressed on regardless with her late husband's 'Sinhalese only' policy... Clearly it was not only differences of pigmentation that could evoke racial fanaticism and discrimination". — Institute of Race Relations News Letter (Great Britain).

"The Canadian government also follows an apartheid policy in practice through the quota for immigrants from Asiatic population groups. Without that, Canada would soon become an Asiatic country. Here the existing apartheid is maintained, in South Africa the government aims at bringing it about . . . Apartheid cannot be called immoral or un-Christian, provided that great sacrifices are made for it". — The Rev. J. Heldring in an article in Pioneer.

"We should be careful lest we forget about the beam in our own eye. Here in Canada a Chinese mother was deported to Hong Kong, leaving her young baby behind in Ottawa, since she, having come here on a visitor's visa, was not allowed to be admitted as an immigrant . . . Another Chinese family is to be deported whenever the father, who is at large, can be located. A woman born of white Russian parents, and at present teaching Russian at the University of British Columbia, is also to be deported, since she is not in a class that is admitted to Canada. The Christian churches are quite complacent and we all join the chorus: Those terrible rulers of South Africa". — A letter in The British Weekly.

"We New Zealanders have our own apartheid policy. We say to the Asians, 'Don't mix with us. That would disrupt our White Christian civilisation. Develop in your own way alongside us, and we'll help you with gifts'. But (thank God) we have avoided the pitfalls of the South African form of this policy — largely because, of course, geography has already given us 'separate areas' ". — Alun Richards in an article in Church and Community (New Zealand).

"The Maori Synod of the New Zealand Presbyterian Church has asked that denomination to make its churches available to Maori congregations when not in use. A report to the church's General Assembly said that complete integration of Maori congregations with the rest of the church was the ultimate ideal, but that such a step was not feasible now". — Ecumenical Press Service.

IN BRIEF

○ The Cape Synod of the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk will meet in Cape Town from 19th October to 9th November. The meeting will be attended by about 720 delegates of the 336 congregations in the Cape Province. No less than 60 committee reports and 400 resolutions will be considered by the synod.

○ The Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk will hold services exclusively in English for the first time in the Smith Street church, in Durban, on 8th October and 12th November. The services are being arranged as a result of a decision taken by the Natal Synod earlier this year (see Newsletter no. 42). The services will indicate if it will be possible eventually to form a wholly English-speaking congregation.

o We are glad to announce that this Newsletter is now also being published on behalf of the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in the Orange Free State. This means that it is now a joint publication of the federated churches in the four provinces of the Republic of South Africa.

o The Students' Christian Association Bookroom in Bree Street, Johannesburg, has been taken over by the Dutch Reformed Church Bookstore (N.G. Kerk-Boekhandel). The S.C.A. Bookstore at Stellenbosch was taken over by the church a year ago. Branches of the church bookstore have also been opened in Durban and at Klerksdorp.

o An orphanage for Coloured children was opened at Steinthal, near Tulbagh, last month. The home is owned by the Dutch Reformed Mission Church (Nederduitse Gereformeerde Sendingkerk), of the Cape, which also controls an institute for deaf Coloured children.

o The propagandist film "Let My People Go", to which we took exception last month, has been rejected by the programme commitee of the Edinburgh Film Festival. It was stated that the film was so "completely one-sided" that the committee had decided it would be unsuitable.

BOOKS RECEIVED

RAS, VOLK EN NASIE IN TERME VAN DIE SKRIF (Race, People and Nation according to the Scripture) by Professor J. C. G. Kotzé. (S.C.A. Publishers, P.O. Box 25, Stellenbosch). Price R1.05 (10s. 6d.). A reasoned and thought-provoking contribution to the current discussion of racial problems from a Christian point of view. The author is professor of Practical Theology at the Theological Seminary at Stellenbosch. It is strongly recommended.

COTTESLOE CONSULTATION. Report of the consultation of South African member churches of the World Council of Churches, held at Cottesloe, Johannesburg, from 7th to 14th December, 1960. This booklet presents a summary of the group discussions and in that process covers the most important aspects of the South African situation as seen by representatives of different churches. The report also contains the resolutions, statements by various church delegations, and other documents. Obtainable from P.O. Box 97, Johannesburg. Price 75c. (7s. 6d.).

RACE, HEREDITY AND CIVILISATION, by Professor W. George. (Britons Publishing Society, London). The author is a professor of Histology and Embryology at the School of Medicine at the University of North Carolina, U.S.A., and a member of the American Association of Anatomists, Zoologists and Human Genetics. The booklet is intended as "a reasoned answer to those who advocate race mixture".

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